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U.S. Department of the Interior

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Emergency Repairs Getting Underway on Alpine Portion of Going-to-the-Sun Road

November 2006 storm damage to be repaired in two phases before entire Sun Road opens for summer


WEST GLACIER, MONT. – On Wednesday of this week, Glacier National Park's east side plowing crew reached the area below the east tunnel on the Going-to-the-Sun Road (Sun Road). Weather permitting, this will allow road repairs to begin for damage that occurred in November 2006 during a tropical storm that hit the Pacific and Inland northwest states. On the heels of the torrential rain storm, a winter weather storm occurred just a few days later, prompting heavy snow accumulations and icy conditions along the alpine portion of the Sun Road and thus preventing any repairs from occurring until now.

Park officials report that there are three sections of damage that must be repaired before a temporary two-lane bridge can be installed across the washout and thereby allow repair work to proceed up the road to the uppermost alpine damage site where a new retaining wall must be built before the entire 50-mile roadway can be opened for vehicle traffic. As a result of this unexpected road work and the need to stockpile supplies and materials nearby in the Sun Point parking lot, all east side oversized vehicles will be required to park at the Rising Sun boat launch this season until further notice.

“Regardless of road repairs and rehabilitation, we want to reiterate that Glacier National Park is open and will be open for normal visitor services this season,” stated Mick Holm, park superintendent. “Although visitors won’t be able to drive across the entire Sun Road this June, they can still enjoy a host of recreational activities and visitor services and enjoy the lower elevation portions of the scenic Sun Road.”

Holm indicated that there are a total of six sites where storm damage must be stabilized along the road below the east tunnel. Five sites sustained loss of a partial lane and will also require having rock debris removed from the roadway. At one site, the washout removed both lanes of the road. Phase I of this work will be conducted by Sandry Construction of Bigfork as a modification to their existing road construction contract.

Phase II will be undertaken as a separate short-term contract that will soon be let by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for the remaining storm damage work, including the bridge installation. This contract is expected to be announced soon and work will commence as quickly as possible.



The short-term contractor will undertake construction of the temporary steel bridge across the two-lane washout. This work will entail the contractor literally building the bridge across the gap section by section until it is secured and anchored on the uphill side.

Once the temporary 125-foot bridge is in place, the contractor will move up the road to repair the remaining two locations east of Logan Pass, including the construction of a new retaining wall.

According to Holm, “The two-lane bridge will remain in place throughout the summer while rebuilding occurs underneath the steel span. The goal will be for this storm repair work to continue throughout the summer and fall and remove the bridge before winter weather sets in.”

On the west side, rehabilitation work on the Sun Road will begin on or about July 1 between the tunnel and Haystack Creek, a distance of 3.5 miles. This section of road will be the first work to be accomplished under the soon-to-be-selected indefinite delivery / indefinite quantities (IDIQ) contract which will allow for ongoing work without the delays from contract negotiations.

Current road conditions, updated as conditions change, are available on the park’s Web site at www.nps.gov/applications/glac/roadstatus/roadstatus.cfm. Road conditions are also available by calling 511, the Montana Department of Transportation Traveler Information System. If your phone does not support 511, call 1-800-226-7623. Both numbers are toll-free. Select “Glacier Park Tourist Information” from the main menu to hear Glacier’s road report.

Road work updates will be provided as new information becomes available. For additional park information, please visit Glacier National Park’s Web site (www.nps.gov/glac) or call park headquarters at 406-888-7800.

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Editor’s Note: Escorted news media photo opportunities will be arranged and announced at key opportunities during the spring road repair work and bridge installation. Digital photos of the November 2006 storm damage are available upon request.